

I had started to inquire about the properties along State Street, I saw the possibilities and the history associated with the State Street Theater.

There has been a movement to fix up Theaters from the past. Cities and neighborhoods are starting to see what a Theater can do for a community.

This effort has taken place in St. Louis, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan and other states, from large theaters to community based small theaters. Theaters are reshaping communities through reuse and bring communities and energy back into neighborhoods.

When we save the State Street Theater we are saving the past history and the new history yet to be discovered. The theater will connect and inspire and share our stories. The theater needs to be remembered, protected and cherished for ourselves, for Milwaukeeans and future generations to come.

The Stories of the State Street Theater matters. It represent stories of the past and the future. The Theater remains relevant connections to our past and future.

We build communities and neighborhoods on the past as seen in Historical Concordia, and Avenue West where the theater is located. Our historical buildings have been the theme for Concordia and Avenue west, and the attractions for people to locate into our neighborhood and Home Tours promote the neighborhood. The future of these two communities, and the business district need the theater. It can act as an anchor between the two communities. Historic buildings create vibrant neighborhoods and adds rich character to the City of Milwaukee and for ourselves and our children and the rest for the city of Milwaukee, as well as promote tourism. We have three bed and breakfast, The Schuster Mansion, The Brunder Mansion, The Manderley which depends on tourism for their business.

Unfortunately their hasn't been a vision to save the theater and adjoining buildings. For a period of time the theater has been vacant and now the unfortunate arson fire along with the surrounding neighborhood struggle to improve itself. Within recent years with the revival of historical homes and 27th Street business corridor. The residents have created a theme with the historical homes for our neighborhood and have brought new hope and new live to an old neighborhoods.

The State Theater is part of this theme. That's why it's important to save the theater and adjoining buildings, it's an asset to our neighborhood and City of Milwaukee. The State Theater can serve as an anchor for the rebirth of a commercial district, 27th and State Street and surrounding communities and neighborhood.

The State Street Theater restored can become a drawing point for the neighborhood, City of Milwaukee, and revive the neighborhood once again.

As residents, our neighborhood and community and as part of the City of Milwaukee are asking for time to see if we can raise funds so save part of the neighborhood.

The redevelopment of the theater and adjacent building will bring new life, and vitality to the City of Milwaukee, and the Concordia Historical, Avenue West neighborhood and the business district. It will bring the best of the past alive again. State Theater holds a special place in the memories of many, was a cornerstone of what once was a thriving neighborhood, which can be revitalized again.

I see the State Street Theater and adjacent building as an existing asset that cannot be reproduced, to the development of the Ave West, Concordia redevelopment and the five partners, and the business district.

There are over fifty bands who got their start at the State Street Theater, which have over 135,000,000 followers on Facebook. The State Street Theater became an important role player in Milwaukee Music Scene and still can be once again.

The State Street Theater will help the business owners, with more foot traffic, new retail and restaurants. Reinvigorate our community with the help of a historic theater versus demolition.

Local hotels and bed and breakfasts will benefit when people visit and stay overnight

Caterers or local restaurants will receive work when the theater holds events.

Students will have an increased access to the arts, service groups can use the facility for their fundraisers.

Special interest groups can arrange a special lecture series.

The list that State Street can provide for the community can go on from wedding, the list is endless.

Preservation Leadership Forum, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Older Buildings, Livable Cities

by Stephanie K Meeks 3-20-2015

Losing these historic buildings, she argued, meant that cities were being drained of economic opportunity, culture and life. As she put it, “Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them.”

Well, over the past few years, our research arm at the Trust, the [Preservation Green Lab](#), has been working to put Jane Jacobs’ theory to the test.

And what we have discovered—after conducting an empirical analysis of several cities across the country, block-by-block—is her argument is in fact correct: Incorporating older and historic buildings can and actually does jumpstart the revitalization of communities.

As historic preservationists, you can imagine how happy we were to find out that this is the case! Still, what we found surprised even us.

We all know and sense that people like the character and authenticity of older buildings, but their power is far more than just aesthetic. They are tremendous engines of economic growth, vitality and quality of life.

Last year, we published a report entitled [*Older, Smaller, Better: Measuring How the Character of Buildings and Blocks Influences Urban Vitality*](#).

What we found is what Jane Jacobs predicted.

Neighborhoods with a mix of older and newer buildings are more diverse in age, race and income.

They have “hidden density”—more people and businesses per square foot than areas with just new buildings.

They are more walkable and have more creative jobs.

They have more new and women- and minority-owned businesses.

And they show more activity on evenings and weekends.

Together, their presence has not only sparked new, high density development on vacant parcels and surface parking lots, but it has also led to an influx of vibrant new small businesses and arts groups.

One thing we learned from our report is that older commercial and mixed-use districts have greater population density—the number of people per square mile—than streets with large, new buildings.

Across America, the story is the same: Old buildings help cities grow, develop and become communities. They are necessary to the civic and municipal fabric, and the key to long-term success.

Preservation is about keeping buildings alive, in active use, and relevant to the needs of the people and the cities that surround them.

It is about building a bigger, better and brighter future by creating jobs, spurring revitalization and improving the economic health of the nation.

We want to help historic neighborhoods continue to thrive, in a way that includes all residents, by unleashing the power and potential of older buildings.

When done correctly, it can elevate and accelerate a city's effort to remake itself. And in Milwaukee, Madison, or anywhere else, we are here to work with you as you help build your future and grow your city.

With that in mind, I want to close today by talking about arguably the most powerful preservation tool in our arsenal, one that is indispensable when it comes to spurring economic growth, and one that I know the panel will be talking about as well—historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Simply put, we would not be seeing the remarkable revitalization happening in cities all across the country right now, without these critical investments.

The federal historic tax credit is the largest investment our government makes to preserve our nation's historic properties, and since it was signed into law in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan, it has been an unqualified success.

Even better, 75 percent of the economic benefits of these projects stay on the ground, in state and local communities.

In general, states with high-performing tax credit programs bring between \$3 and \$7 million in federal credits a year back to those states.

Here in Wisconsin, over the past 14 months, \$35.1 million in tax credits have leveraged more than \$211 million in federal and private investment expenditures toward nearly 40 historic tax credit projects.

According to the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, 60 percent of these projects were vacant. So this credit is putting

vacant historic properties back into productive use and back on the tax rolls.

And that investment figure doesn't take into effect the jobs that will be created, the multiplier effects that follow, and the new life injected into struggling neighborhoods and buildings that have long had an impact on a given community.

All across Wisconsin, these tax credits are helping to renovate and restore the older buildings that are driving economic growth and urban renewal and making city centers the places people want to live, work and play.

I hope Wisconsin will continue to invest strongly in its tax credit program. As the projects I just mentioned and many more reflect, it is making all the difference.

We have tremendous resources within our reach that will help cities grow faster and be more attractive and affordable. We should use them, to keep this revival moving forward.

Thank you all so much.

Stephanie K. Meeks is the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

League of Historic American Theatres HISTORIC THEATRE RESCUE, RESTORATION, REHABILITATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE MANUAL



V1. WHY RESTORE?

Real estate consultant Donovan Rypkema noted that, "today historic preservation is the common denominator in virtually every sustained success story in downtown revitalization."

The theatre can have a significant economic impact by spurring downtown revitalization. When a city spends money on its downtown, it signals to private investors that it's safe for them to do the same, that their investment will be more secure.

Historic preservation has a positive impact on a community's economic health, and local historic districts stabilize and often increase both residential and commercial property values. Rehabilitation of historic buildings requires more skilled labor, creates more jobs, and spurs more new business growth than new construction. Neighborhoods on the edge of downtown also enjoy increased investment as a result of downtown revitalization. Your theatre could be the centerpiece of this rebirth.

The arts are an important factor used by many businesses and individuals when deciding to locate to a community. They want to move into a healthy city, and healthy cities have vibrant downtowns that don't fold up after 5 PM.

As well as bringing locals to downtown after hours, a boon for restaurants and retail, an operating theatre can be a draw for tourists, who are a major market for cultural offerings. Heritage tourism, a huge economic benefit, is often cited as the main reason they visit a city. Tourists visiting historic sites typically stay longer and spend more than other tourists.

Historic preservation helps save dollars and promotes recycling by using existing buildings and infrastructure -- "Sustainable development." It encourages migration back to existing neighborhoods by enhancing what's already there.

**League of Historic American Theatres
HISTORIC THEATRE RESCUE, RESTORATION, REHABILITATION
AND ADAPTIVE REUSE MANUAL**



V4. HOW DOES THE CITY FIT IN?

Your city should be a leader in the preservation of your historic theatre, for all the reasons laid out in the article "Save It To Do What: A Vision for Your City."

Much like a convention center or sports facility, a historic theatre can be an economic engine. It's not just about "quality of life" and it's certainly not about "halting progress." Successful projects embrace the business life of your city and provide the nucleus for urban development. Your success makes the urban core pedestrian-active, a destination for visitors and their money.

Your city's investment in historic preservation as a downtown development tool is both pro-sustainable development and anti-sprawl, which equals smart growth.

Donovan Rypkema, the real estate consultant, makes the point that, "Smart growth has become a broad-based citizen movement with support across the political and geographic spectrum. But any smart growth effort that does not have historic preservation and downtown revitalization as core elements of the approach is stupid growth, period."

Cities are not monolithic, that is, they don't speak or behave with one voice. You will typically find supporters and detractors among the city leaders and employees. Your job will be to turn most of the detractors into supporters. The city **MUST** be your best ally.

If the timing is right, during the next election ask mayoral candidates to make the theatre's restoration a campaign initiative!

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V6. WHAT THE CITY CAN DO TO HELP

Even if your city has no funds available to help your project, it can still take action.

One of the greatest services your city can do is to include the theatre in its plans for downtown development, and protect it and other historic properties with a strong preservation ordinance. Without these protective ordinances, your city is allowing developers, who often live elsewhere, to design your community for you.

If your city is ready to enact a preservation ordinance, it's wise to provide the buildings in the proposed district with temporary protection from demolition. That will buy the city time to evaluate each building for designation, without pre-emptive demolition by property owners fearing future restrictions. One city told a theatre chain that they could not build a multiplex unless they donated the historic theatre they owned to the city. Another encouraged a developer to sell a threatened theatre to the city for \$1.00, in return for zoning and tax incentives on other properties the developer owned. Using more drastic measures, the city could seize the building by eminent domain, take ownership for back taxes, or the city can make repairs to a blighted building and put a lien on the property.

The zoning board can rezone the area around the theatre as a "special use district" arts and entertainment center, so alterations to the building to make it retail or office space are restricted.

If the city owns the facility, it can receive funds for approved preservation projects, from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO.) Survey and planning grants are also available from the state, so if a comprehensive historic building survey has not been conducted, ask that one be done as soon as possible. The SHPO has information on conducting these surveys.

The Certified Local Government Program is a federal-state-local preservation partnership your city can qualify for if they commit to addressing historic preservation issues at the local level. Sub-grant funding is available through the SHPO, and can be used for a variety of preservation-related activities. To find if your city has a program in place, go to: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/clg/index.htm>

Cities can provide building code relief for historic structures, allowing more stringent code requirements to be modified, so the building can be put back into use. For instance, current zoning may require each building owner to provide a specified number of parking spaces, but a variance may be allowed for the theatre.

Cities may use their taxing authority to encourage or fund your project. These ideas are explored in more detail in the "Financing Your Historic Theatre Project" articles. Some vehicles include: Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Special purposes districts Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) TDR Banks and Landmark TDR Banks

Being pro-preservation can bring national recognition, if your city is eligible to apply for special designation as a Preserve America Community. This program, a White House initiative, recognizes communities that protect and celebrate their heritage; use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization; and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/communities.html>

As part of the local preservation ordinance, your city can put in place a provision that punishes a property owner who demolishes a building without historic preservation commission approval by placing a multi-year moratorium on developing the site. One state requires developers who don't seek the required permits for demolition to compensate the city for the value of the building they destroy.

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